

World Service Business Conference 2015 Delegates' Report, OA South and East England Intergroup

The World Service Business Conference is an annual event, held in Albuquerque, New Mexico and is the group conscience of OA as a whole. At the Conference, decisions are made which affect the OA fellowship as a whole, such as making changes to the OA Bylaws and Policy Manual, electing trustees and approving new or amended literature. This year, the OA South and East Intergroup sent two delegates to the Conference to represent the views of groups within our area.

The Business sessions

Attendance The credentials count varied by session with 17 Trustees and 176 voting delegates being the highest numbers of eligible voters. This represented 22 countries, 37 states and 7 provinces. R9 had 20 delegates from Denmark, England, Ireland, Sweden, Italy, Greece, Germany, Israel, Scotland, Austria, France, and Netherlands. We got to hear the Serenity Prayer in Spanish, French, Dutch, German, and Swedish. This was the highest number of delegates from R9 at WSBC thus far. But our attendance ranking was still next to last followed by R10. We are again eligible to send "delegates at large" from R9 to WSBC 2016 because our attendance per eligible service bodies was less than 40%.

Motions

The following motions were debated and the outcomes were as follows:

Motion to change the Preamble

This was passed, but with amendments. The words "restricting or purging" will not be included, and so only the last sentence of the Preamble has been changed. It will now read:

"Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive eating **and compulsive food behaviours** and to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer."

Motion to reduce the percentage needed to change the Steps or Traditions

This was not passed, and it remains that a change to the Steps or Traditions would require responses from 55% of all OA groups, with 75% of them being in favour of the change. An amendment was proposed to change the response rate needed from groups to 45%, but this failed.

Motion to include the full name of Overeaters Anonymous on all displays, banners, badges, and other signs at World Service events

This was amended to remove the word 'badges', and an extra sentence was added to make clear that badges would not be included. The amended motion was passed.

Motion to establish the expectation that delegates to WSBC will serve on a committee while here, and for the following year

Some of the wording was amended slightly, but the purpose of the motion remained the same, and the motion was passed.

Motion to make the WSBC final conference report available electronically only

We proposed an amendment to say that the report could be made available in hard copy on request, as this amendment had been requested by our IG reps at our WSBC meeting in February. This amendment was defeated (approx 60% against, 40% in favour). The original motion was passed.

Motion to introduce recovery coins for 1-7 days and 1-4 weeks of abstinence

This did not receive enough support on the agenda questionnaire, and so was not discussed at conference.

A Consent Agenda adopted for the following motions:

- New Business Motion **A** (WSBC Policy 1979d)
 - removing obsolete policy referring to our founder
- Proposal Item **1&2** (Bylaws, Subpart B, Article VI, Sections 3, 4)
 - more appropriate wording referencing deregistering an IG or service board
- Proposal Item **3** (Bylaws, Subpart B, Article X, Section 3)
 - change to "70 days" for selection of delegates and alternates
- Proposal Item **4** (Bylaws, Subpart B, Article X, Section 3)
 - removing wording no longer needed (again referring to our founder)
- Proposal Item **5** (Bylaws, Subpart B, Article X, Section 3)
 - January report on SB numbers used when registering delegates
- Proposal Item **6** (Bylaws, Subpart B, Article VII, Section 1)
 - removed reference to an IG that has closed

The motion regarding maximum numbers to serve on the WSBC conference committees was withdrawn when it was pointed out that attendance figures didn't warrant any chance for the higher numbers to be utilized.

Literature

Three OA leaflets had been reviewed and rewritten by the Literature Committee over the last year, and all were approved by the Conference as a whole. Therefore we will now have updated versions of the following leaflets: A Programme of Recovery; A Guide for Sponsors; and The OA Handbook for Members, Groups and Service Bodies.

Elections There was a bit of confusion regarding the voting for our R9 Trustee but the invalidated ballots didn't affect the outcome. We were both surprised that during the election Q&A there seemed to be some "campaigning" going on rather than just questioning of the candidates.

Parliamentary Procedure Items of Interest

Questions posed after deliberation was changed to "Request for Information" (rather than the former "Point of Information"), which helped clarify that a delegate was seeking information via a question rather than providing opinions or giving input.

Time for questions after deliberation was limited to 15 minutes before one could ask for a vote. This could be extended, but was only done once during business sessions.

Reference Subcommittee (of Bylaws) meets to discuss the various motions sometimes giving their recommendation on motions. Also when any motion receives 3 amendments it is taken from the floor and reference works with the makers and others to see if the motion can be reworded in an effort to word more clearly, and reach compromise to hopefully bring about consensus. Caroline and I both attended some sessions and found it interesting and useful.

Deliberations on motions strictly follow Robert's Rules. Those wishing to speak in favour or in opposition to a particular motion gather informally to discuss their reasoning and opinions. The "huddle" then decides which people will speak. The selected speakers then do their best to convey not only their own point of view but also the opinions and arguments of the others. It was interesting and informative to see deliberations at this level. There was a keen sense of honouring our Traditions while allowing consensus for OA as a whole yet still maintaining a sense of unity after the vote. We both participated in deliberations and spoke on some of the motions. There was a feeling throughout the many deliberations that we were all equals and we could listen to differing points of view without "personalities" being a factor

Committee Reports were presented for each WSBC committee (who had met prior to the Business Meetings). It was inspiring to see the many ways the committees propose to carry the message in the upcoming year. There was a wealth of information presented quickly regarding proposed “goals/projects” for the coming year. It’s fantastic and rewarding to hear all the different ways the message is being carried –both inside and outside the rooms – and we look forward to being able to share in more detail as it becomes available.

Other Reports

The failure earlier in the year of the “Find A Meeting” function on the oa.org website was mentioned several times including lack of funding which contributed to the issue. Currently funding has been directed to keep the site updated and running smoothly.

Literature sales continue to generate the most income.

There is a way to contribute to WSO 7th Tradition through “automatic recurring contributions [ARC]”. The details of how to do this from outside the US weren’t clear but were thought to be possible.

Lifeline subscriptions are still below goal of being self-supporting.

There were reports on various “board committees” which reflected the hard work done by the BOT especially in the areas of budget, literature, and the operations plan.

The Treasurer reported we are not being as self-supporting current and many budget cuts resulted. There is a need to improve our 7th Tradition contributions at all levels.

Caroline posed a question in follow up to our failed motion regarding how many people would be reached when the Region Chairs attended the meeting in Australia. This question was appropriate as their report reflected their financial decision was influenced by being able to carry the message while there. The Trustee fielding the question did not know the answer. We later found out that the R10 assembly has about 8 representatives and is hoping for up to 40 at the convention following the assembly; but this answer wasn’t given on the floor for all to hear.

Seventh Tradition was collected once during the week for a total of \$5921.51. This amount was an increase of about \$1500 from last year and it was effective to collect only once rather than various times during the business sessions.

An Emergency New Business Motion proposal brought by a R9 delegate was not deemed “emergency new business.” However, the idea which was the possibility of some funding already designated for PO announcements on Google being utilized in R9 (rather than just in North America) is being considered for implementation.

Other Noteworthy Items in the Business Sessions

There were many questions and comments about demographics of OA involving how can we work to change this.

There will be future business items about virtual service bodies and how they will fit into the OA structure in the future. They currently can join an IG but not a Region. There is some talk of them forming their own 11th Region. There has been emphasis on the 7th Tradition so that these meetings are self- supporting.

The Trustees will address the “Ask it Basket questions” after conference giving them time to reflect and consider responses, this is now available to view on the OA website at http://www.oa.org/pdfs/ask-it_basket_wsbc_15.pdf. There was mention of ideas about an

“OA App” and also how to bring us more into the social media realm as a way of reaching out and spreading the word.

Some Observations about the Business Meetings

There were many volunteers who served diligently helping us conduct business efficiently and effectively.

To facilitate business, delegates are able to pass written notes to each other keeping the talking to a minimum.

Interesting to note that our Trustees sometimes voiced opinions on issues being deliberated and sometimes were silent.

One delegate who had a strong objection involving approved “prayers and closings” was lovingly informed that the way to change something for OA as a whole is to “make a motion for next year” so we can all deliberate the idea and consider if we want to make a group conscience decision to change.

Workshops

There were various workshops throughout the week around this year’s theme “The Miracle of Abstinence.” The topics and questions for sharing follow.

How the Miracle of Abstinence is Supported by the Fellowship. Questions 1. How does being involved in my OA community support my abstinence? 2. Do I understand that the Fellowship, while important, is only a part of the solution? 3. How do I welcome others to participate and become involved in OA? What examples do I set?

How the Miracle of Abstinence is Supported by Using the Tools. Questions 1. How does using the Tools support working the Steps? 2. Which Tools will I use today to maintain my abstinence?

We Receive the Miracle of Abstinence by Practicing the Spiritual Principles of the Program. Questions 1. How does practicing these Principles strengthen the miracle of abstinence? 2. We’ve all heard “We practice these principles in all our affairs” in Step Twelve and “principles before personalities” in Tradition Twelve. Give some examples of ways you live by these principles. 3. How do the Principles of the Twelve Concepts help us apply the Steps and Traditions in our service work?

A Forum was facilitated by the Region Chairs Committee on “There’s no place like OA.” The session included a play about Dorothy on the Road to Recovery with the other “Oz” characters. We delegates acted as her sponsor giving suggestions –after group discussion - for how to work the steps. The idea was to understand the necessity of taking all 12 Steps in order to recover.

The meeting discussing the Strategic Operations Plan (SOP) was held at the same time as the required “All about Conference” for “green dots” and their “mentors” so we were unable to attend. It was noted this will be scheduled differently next year to allow delegates to participate. There was mention of how the new process is “keeping it simple” allowing more to be achieved.

The Chair of the Board and the Trustee Chair of the Bylaws committee held a special workshop on “business motions” as a result of not only our failed motion but also several

others. There was an opportunity to discuss our failed motion regarding the Region Chairs Committee third meeting travel earlier. We will report more on this at a later date but have been encouraged to continue on with the idea behind this motion. We are exploring the information garnered plus looking at how to rework and resubmit it next year if the IG agrees.

Board of Trustees Meeting

Immediately after the close of business meetings, this session of the Board of Trustees (including newly elected positions) that is open to observation by delegates selects officers for the coming year. The new "Chair of the Board" was selected after two tied votes (8 votes for each candidate) by drawing a name from "the hat." It was exciting to see a contested election with two ready, willing, and able candidates. Trustees are also appointed then to serve as Co Chairs of conference committees, and as Chairs of the various BOT committees.

After coming home from WSBC the newly selected Chair of the Board sent an invitation to all delegates asking for their continued communications through her "open door" policy. She has asked for input through the delegates to the Chair so we can continue to see growth and change in OA. This was a nice invitation for open dialogue.

Region Dinner

The R9 delegates met informally over dinner Wednesday evening. Delegates reported on the "news" from their respective areas. We were also informed about the upcoming assembly in Paris. The French IG is working on accommodations for "visitors." Funding requests are due June 28th. The R9 PI committee developed a leaflet/card for reaching out to newcomers with intentions to translate it into various languages used in R9. It's also been submitted for "OA" literature approval to the board. The R9 7th Tradition items (luggage tags and card cases) were available for sale in the "boutique." The Chair also suggested each IG/SB have alternates to serve as Representatives to regional assembly in case delegate/s are unable to attend.

Saturday night Banquet

We had the opportunity to officially meet the new Board, be introduced to former Trustees (still doing service!), visit with other delegates, and hear an inspiring Chair. (The recording is available as a podcast on the OA website <https://www.oa.org/podcasts/182616/> .) There was a dance and more fellowship opportunities afterwards.

SEEIG Delegates Committee Experiences

Francene: I served on the Twelve Step Within (TSW) Committee. We broke out into several subcommittees with mine concentrating on "Ideas That Work." This subcommittee just had approval for the "Simplicity Cards." (Details about these nifty "cards" to carry to help your recovery can be found at oa.org.) They are in the final board approval stages of a sound enhanced Power Point presentation about "Relapse Intervention." In the coming year we will be creating/editing a document about "Relapse Action Plan." If time allows we will also look at "Tips for Those In Relapse" to encompass actions not only for the OA in relapse but also for others to offer help and support.

[I had asked to be on the "Web and Tech" Committee but was not placed there. I feel our IG was well served by this decision. The World Service Office had already addressed most of the issues I had planned to raise there. This also allowed me continuity of service for the IG and the Region as I serve on TSW at both. I did get a tip from a former member of Web/Tech that I will pass along to our Web committee.]

Other members of the TSW Committee are working on revising two pieces of literature and maintaining the OA Speakers database.

I'm looking forward to serving on this committee in the coming year.

Caroline: I served on the Public Information committee, as I am on the PI/PO committee at Intergroup so felt this would be a good opportunity to find out more about the PI work being done in other areas. There are about 20 people on this committee from all parts of the US and Canada, as well as Sweden, England and Israel so there were a variety of experiences and viewpoints among the group.

We decided on three projects for the coming year, and so split into three subcommittees:

- The Literature Review and PI Starter Kit subcommittee will review the PI manual and Guidelines for Health Fair participation, and develop a PI starter kit with some simple ideas and a selection of leaflets, to be sold through the Literature Service
- The Memtor/Mentee subcommittee will continue to develop a mentoring service, matching up intergroups who need help and support in PI work with experienced intergroups who can share their experience and what has worked for them
- The PI Email Group subcommittee will continue to develop an email group for everyone interested in PI to share ideas, ask questions and support each other in doing PI in their area.

I will be working on the PI Email Group subcommittee. Each subcommittee filled in a Goals sheet, breaking down their projects into specific tasks and setting deadlines for when we would like to achieve them. Hopefully this will keep us focused throughout the year.

My committee have already been working on our projects, exchanging emails and debating ideas and I'm really looking forward to getting to know them over the next year and hopefully being able to make good progress on the tasks ahead of us.

Every committees elects a Delegate Co-Chair who is the link between the committee and the Board of Trustees for the coming year. The main responsibility of this role is to write a report for each meeting of the Board of Trustees, which updates them about the progress that the committee has made towards achieving their Goals. I will be serving in that role for the PI committee – I'm looking forward to it as it means I will get to know member of the committee members outside of just my subcommittee.

SEEIG Delegates share personally about their WSBC experience

CAROLINE:

I'm so grateful for having had the opportunity to attend WSBC, it has been an amazing opportunity to give service and to grow in my personal recovery.

I was nervous about attending the Conference for the first time, thinking that I wouldn't know what was going on and wouldn't be able to make much of a contribution to the proceedings – I had thought that as a 'green dot' (first time attendee) my job was to sit at the back and just watch and learn. However, with Francene as my mentor I was very much encouraged to take an active role, and had my first experiences of standing up and speaking in front of such a large group – I presented an amendment to a motion, asked questions during the reports and also gave a report on behalf of my committee., I'm really glad I did these things because it meant I felt like I was a participant rather than an observer – thank you Francene!

During the week I spoke to OA members from all over the world, and it was lovely to feel that same sense of fellowship that I experience in my meetings back home. Everyone was so friendly and helpful, especially as it was my first time at Conference, and by the end of the week I couldn't get in the lift or go to breakfast without bumping into familiar faces!

Coming away from Conference, I am even more grateful for my recovery and all the gifts I have received, and more determined to do what I can to help the compulsive overeater who is still suffering, whether inside or outside of OA.

FRANCENE:

The business meeting were efficient. We actually finished two hours early on Saturday at the 5th and final business session. There was really a sense of being part of the worldwide group conscience. Much was accomplished with integrity, fellowship, and humour.

Learning about the various ways our OA literature comes into being through different processes was amazing. So many OA's are involved in the efforts that go into new literature and review of existing literature.

I enjoyed looking in the "boutique" at "ways and means" different IG/SB's have for raising funds to help carry the message.

Attending OA meetings with OA's from all over the world - with diversity but a common disease- sharing on the 12 Step solution was uplifting. I really felt a sense of "unity" at all times – during business plus in the informal sessions also.

Because there is so much business to attend to, there was not always an opportunity for fellowship except at meals and the stray little bits of off time. Yet I could still sense the strength of recovery and the commitment to carrying the message. The dedication to service and to our common purpose of carrying the message of recovery was phenomenal.

In closing

There will be a "formal" report issued sometime in August of the 2015 World Service Business Conference. We will share the link for those interested in even more details; and we will call attention in the future to any information we think would be of interest and benefit to SEEIG. If any of you would like more information about WSBC or our experiences there – or just want to see our rather large business binders – please let us know.

It's been a wonderful experience and we have been honoured to be of service to the intergroup by representing you this year.

P.S. Be on the lookout for information on OA's 1st-4th September 2016 "Recovery: The Trail to Freedom" Convention in Boston, MA, USA.

